

CAPE SHOW 1903

As far as I have been able to research, the Cape Show held in February 1903 was the first at which a registered Welsh Pony was officially shown in South Africa. In the article on Hexham, Section C Welsh Pony, details are given of his breeding, and the importation of this pony by Mr Edward H F Mellish.

The Judges Messrs T Smith, C Southey, J Ayliff and Geo Armstrong had a hard task but they are 'past masters in their knowledge of horses'. Their official Judges' Report reads: 'We consider the exhibits very good in the imported Thoroughbred stallion class, but Mr Mellish's Pericles stood out head and shoulders above the rest. The South African thoroughbred colts, one year off, are far below show condition, and have never been properly cared for, and are, therefore, small and weedy, and we could not award any prize. The imported Cleveland stallions were really first class and we had some difficulty in deciding the winner. The exhibit of imported Cleveland mares is remarkably good, and the same remark applies to the stallions. The exhibits in the imported Hackney and roadster stallion's class are exceptionally fine, as are those in the mare class, and the stallion class over three years old. There was another excellent competition in the imported Clydesdale stallion class, but we had to disqualify an entry in the Suffolk Punch class as not being of the right type, and in a number of instances we could not award first prizes. We do not recommend horses of such diverse breeds being shown in the imported stallions or the unprovided breed class, the same remark applying to the mares. The champion prize in the imported class was awarded to Mr Mellish's Pericles, one of the handsomest and most perfect type of Thoroughbred sires we have seen in a show yard in this country. We wish also to draw attention to the magnificent and perfect Hackney sire Tribute, the Cleveland sire Ingmanthorpe Gilbert II, the Clydesdale Stranraer Stamp, and the Flemish stallion, Hodie Best. In conclusion we wish to remark that the exhibits in this section, as far as we had to judge, are most creditable to the country, and we wish to express our surprise that after what the country has gone through during the war, so many owners and breeders should have been able to bring forward so large and so good a number of exhibits.'

Further 'general comments' on the show were:-

‘G. H. Kotze's "Nightshade," was not in show condition, but one cannot help thinking that if the owner gets her in decent fettle, this old mare would take a lot of beating, judging by points.

‘In "South African bred Colts, 2 years old," Mr Kotze won with “Normandy,” one of the Flemish stallion "Hodie's" progeny, and in fillies, with "Serah,” by the same sire.

‘In “best Brood Mares with foal, Imported and Colonial,” Mr Mellish won with “Miss Lucy,” who had a beautiful foal at foot to “Florismart,” a sire admired immensely and now gone to Pretoria.

‘The fancy pony class showed some excellent exhibits, while in the general classes, including riding and carriage horses, cart and heavy draught animals, there was very keen competition.

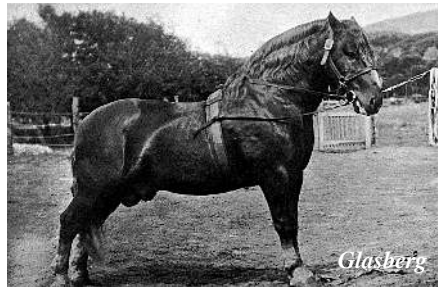
‘The exhibits in the horse section were undoubtedly very good, in fact the best in the show, and some of the Stallions would have done well in the best company in Europe. This is the more remarkable when we consider what set-back stock breeding and horse raising in particular has had during the past three years. A pleasant feature was the fact that many farmers are breeding to type and not simply using as a sire a stallion who appeared a good-looking horse. Some exhibits were certainly in their wrong classes and some of the stock might have been in better show condition. Evidently the belief in feeding the colt before he is born (by attending to the mare) is not practiced in some parts.’

There was a special mention as follows: ‘One was surprised to see the old English sire ‘Swillingson’ paraded, showing marks of his recent sea voyage. This animal must be about 20 years old and however good he may have been, his sway-back, hollow eye and wrinkled eyelid show he is no longer in his first youth. Mr Mellish, who imported him, is going to give us a practical demonstration in horse breeding. In this case we shall watch with interest the result of such an aged horse mated with our mares’. Unfortunately, this would never be known as Edward Mellish passed away in 1905. It is noticed that Pericles was owned by a Mr van der Merwe at the 1905 show.

I wish modern judges would be as forthright as they were in 1903.



Pericles – Thoroughbred Stallion



Brigand – Suffolk Punch Stallion



Bromsgrave's Pride – Cleveland Bay



Rifleman II – Hackney Stallion



Miss Lucy – Hackney Mare



New Year's Gift – Hackney Colt



Vrede Hoek Farm Homestead with stables to the left of the house



Photo of Cape Town c1896 with the Vrede Hoek farm marked



Horse Parade in the Paddock – Rosebank Showgrounds



Judging the Stallions – Rosebank Showgrounds

In the earlier years, the judging of the livestock was done the day before the official opening of the show. This was open to the exhibitors and their family and friends only, hence the low number of spectators; however, suitably attired. It was only later that this became part of the show where the public would be allowed to view the official judging



1903

The photographs of the horses and the judging are from the Western Cape Agricultural Journals while the plan of the showgrounds is from the Show Catalogue and 'Farming Industries of Cape Colony